

This document highlights changes to the NEW Southwest Interagency Fire Restriction & Closure Program (Program). The Program includes the Southwest Interagency Fire Restriction and Closure Master Operating Plan (MOP) and the National Fire Restriction & Closure Website: www.firerestrictions.us. This document, along with the MOP, and other supporting documents can be found online on the [Southwest Coordination Center's website](#).

Master Operating Plan vs. Toolbox: The (MOP) provides operating guidance for fire restrictions and closures in the Southwest Area (SWA). The plan identifies the purpose, authority, areas, and the restriction and closure process—initiation, implementation, and rescission.

What's Changing

- The MOP *replaces* the former SWA Interagency Fire Restrictions and Closures Toolbox.

What's Not

- Some aspects of the plan/process remain the same. Use this document as a guide to determine what's changing and what isn't.

Zones vs. Areas: For ease of implementation and coordination, the SWA has been divided into eight fire restriction and closure coordination "Areas." Six Zones and Areas match up, and are the same. Four zones, two per state, have been combined. A list of management units/boundaries within each Area and an Area Map are included in Appendix 3 and 4 of the MOP, or in the Reference Guide document.

What's Changing

- AZ – Williams and Flagstaff Zones have been combined and are now the Northern Arizona Area for fire restriction and closure coordination.
- NM – Santa and Taos Zones have been combined and are now the Santa Fe Area for fire restriction and closure coordination.

What's Not

- The following Zones and Areas match up, but they are identified as fire restriction coordination areas for fire restriction and closure coordination.
- AZ – Central West Area, Southeast Arizona Area, White Mountain Area
- NM – Albuquerque Area, Gila/Las Cruces Area, Pecos Area

Restriction Language and Closure Guidelines: One of the aims of this effort is to create uniform fire restriction/closure language by standardizing prohibitions, exemptions, and baseline fire restrictions. However, each agency/tribe must cite their actual regulations/laws; *therefore, the wording for the prohibition may be slightly different. Exemptions may vary according to specific agency laws and regulations.*

What's Changing

- The former four stages of fire restrictions/closures have been replaced by two levels: Stage I and Stage II, and closures. Public lands are either open without restrictions, open with State I or Stage II restrictions, or fully or partially closed.
- Prohibitions and exemptions for State I, Stage II (Elevated), and Closures have been standardized.
- The standardized prohibitions, exemptions, and baseline fire restrictions are included in Appendix 6 of the MOP.
- Baseline fire restrictions are the standard restrictions that are always in effect by agencies as described by their laws and regulations. They vary slightly between agencies.

What's Not

- Each agency/tribe will continue to cite their actual regulations/laws; therefore, the wording for the prohibition may be slightly different. Exemptions may vary according to specific agency laws and regulations.
- Each agency/tribe is responsible for drafting their own document/orders and having their law enforcement officers and legal counsel review them to ensure they are correct and enforceable.

Communications/Information: How agencies/tribes share fire restriction and closure information with their stakeholders remains the same. The MOP introduces the role and responsibilities of the State Coordinators. Arizona State Coordinator Dolores Garcia and New Mexico State Coordinator Lawrence Lujan are responsible for working with Area Restriction Coordinators (ARCs) on updating the National Fire Restriction & Closure Website. In addition, the State Coordinators will provide statewide, interagency news releases announcing/terminating fire restrictions/closures, and provide updates. The news releases will provide a broad perspective with a link to each agency/tribe website. Media inquiries will be referred to the PAO/PIO of the agency/tribe in question.

What's Changing

- State Coordinators in AZ and NM will release statewide interagency news releases.
- AZ & NM Forests are encouraged to send out one Forestwide news release.

What's Not

- PAOs/PIOs will continue drafting their own news releases and following their communications plans or standard operating procedures for public notification.

Initiation, Implementation, and Rescission of Restriction and Closures: In the SWA, zone boards are established under the direction of the Southwest Coordinating Group to direct fire management activities, and to provide increased efficiencies among the agencies within the Zones/Areas. *Fire Restriction and Closure Coordination—initiation, implementation, and rescission—has and will continue to be the responsibility of the Zone Boards.* Zone Board members from each participating agency/tribe serve as a conduit between their agency/tribe and other zone members.

What's Changing

- Industrial Fire Precaution stage language in existing contracts and clauses may not match up with the new uniform fire restriction language. It is the responsibility of each agency to work with their contracting and permitting specialist to provide guidance for transition to the new language. The Forest Service's Industrial Fire Precaution Planning Guidance document provides guidance on how to interpret the language in existing industrial precaution plans and provide direction on language to be used in new contracts.
- Each Area will have an assigned Area Restriction Coordinator (ARC). A list of ARCs and their roles and responsibilities can be found in the Reference Guide document.
- NEW Interagency Fire Restriction & Closure Website: www.firerestrictions.us. This is the "one-stop shop" for fire restriction and closure information across Arizona, New Mexico, west Texas, and the Oklahoma Panhandle.
- Both State Coordinators will work with each Area to develop an implementation/rescission schedule and protocol.

What's Not

- Zone Boards promote interagency participation and coordinate fire restrictions/closures by using the criteria and checklist in Appendix 5 of the MOP.
- NM will continue to use www.nmfireinfo.com, with a link to <http://firerestrictions.us/nm/>.
- AZ will continue to use <http://wildlandfire.az.gov/>, with a link to <http://firerestrictions.us/az/>.
- We will continue to use the restrictions hotline: 1-877-864-6985
- Fire restriction and closure information will continue to be posted on the Public Lands Information Center website: www.publiclands.org. Please continue to send your news releases to: katkinso@blm.gov.
- Each agency/tribe will post signs and notifications according to their procedures and regulations to inform the public of the restrictions and closures.